

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please cancel Claim 49 without prejudice.

1.-5. **(CANCELED)**

6. **(PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED)** A method of suturing a portion of biological tissue using a suturing device having a longitudinal axis, a needle attached to a suture, a needle driver, and at least one needle holder, the method comprising:

(a) positioning a distal needle holder in a distal position relative to the portion of biological tissue, the distal needle holder adapted to releasably hold the needle, positioning a proximal needle holder in a proximal position relative to the portion of biological tissue, the proximal needle holder adapted to releasably hold the needle, and positioning a distal end of the needle driver in a proximal position relative to the portion of biological tissue;

(b) positioning the needle in either the proximal position or the distal position;

(c) moving the needle driver longitudinally in a first direction along a path substantially parallel to the longitudinal axis such that the needle and suture pass through the portion of biological tissue, thereby forming a suture incision through which the suture passes; and

(d) repeating (a) - (c) to form a series of stitches;

wherein the needle is positioned in a proximal position relative to the portion of biological tissue by releasably holding the needle in the proximal needle holder positioned in a proximal position relative to the portion of biological tissue; and

wherein the needle is positioned in the proximal position relative to the portion of biological tissue by releasably holding the needle with the distal needle holder positioned in the distal position relative to the portion of biological tissue and translating the distal needle holder to the proximal position.

7.-42. **(CANCELED)**

43. **(PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED)** The method of Claim 6, wherein the path is straight.

Application No.: 09/607,845
Filing Date: June 30, 2000

44. **(PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED)** The method of Claim 6, further comprising moving the needle driver longitudinally in a second direction substantially opposite to the first direction along the path substantially parallel to the longitudinal axis.

45. **(PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED)** The method of Claim 6, wherein moving the needle driver longitudinally in the first direction advances the needle from the proximal needle holder to the distal needle holder.

46. **(PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED)** The method of Claim 6, wherein the distal needle holder is positioned in the distal position relative to the portion of biological tissue by placing the proximal needle holder in the distal position.

47. **(PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED)** The method of Claim 45, wherein moving the needle driver longitudinally in the first direction results in the needle being releasably held by the distal needle holder.

48. **(PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED)** The method of Claim 46, wherein the method further comprises releasing the needle from the needle driver after the needle is releasably held by the distal needle holder.

49. **(CANCELED)**